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THE  
L I F E  
O F  
EDMUND WALLER.

By PERCIVAL STOCKDALE.

L O N D O N,  
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MDCCLXXII.





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**I**T has been lamented by biographers, and echoed by their readers, that the life of a poet affords but few materials for a narrative; and that the time of his birth and death, with the intermediate dates of his publications, are the chief anecdotes of him which we can communicate to the world.

This opinion, like many others, is not controverted, because it hath been long received. It appears, upon a superficial view, to have substance; but it will vanish upon examination.

It must be owned that the poet's journey through life is often difficult to be traced. The sensibility and ardour of his mind will not suffer him to travel on in the beaten and uniform track, along which the generality of mankind are satisfied to proceed. He often quits the common road for the unfrequented haunts of meditation; he is sometimes seduced from his course by pleasure, and lost in her flowery labyrinth; and sometimes disgusted with the roughness of the way, he leaves it in dejection, and seeks the cavern of despair.

It is with poets, as it is with the rest of mankind; but a few of them, comparatively speaking, are born to affluence. A rich inheritance is, indeed, more apt to lull genius, than to call forth its exertion.

tion. Human nature is not formed to flourish in extremes. Poetical ardour is damped by penury, and dissipated by wealth. Thus the mind of man is equally unfit for glorious achievements, under the equinoctial fervor, and the polar frost. The thoughts of the inhabitant of Iceland are confined to the provision of necessary sustenance; the pleasures of his life are circumscribed by the immediate, and blunt sensations of animal nature. The scene is more varied to the African, but not by intellectual activity. His senses are quick and fine, but he is too indolent to make them the source of reflection and imagination. His body and his mind are enfeebled by the perpendicular sun. He reclines under a spreading shade; he inhales the fragrant breath of the zephyr; he is lulled by the murmurs of a neighbouring stream. His happiness is, love without gallantry, and repose without contemplation.

As the poet then is generally born poor, he has the difficulties of life to combat by his own dexterity and endeavours. He is not protected and recommended by gold, that magical auxiliary, which gives vigour to the body, and alacrity to the mind; which raises us without talents or virtue, to the first departments of a state; unlocks to us the cabinets of kings, and authorizes us to determine the fate of nations. Fortune deigns not to smile upon him when he comes into the world; and nature but ill prepares him to despise, and to defeat her frown.

Many causes conspire to break the schemes which he forms for his distant advantage, to disgust him against mankind, and to withdraw him from society. He grows impatient of a uniform and laborious progress, from the delicacy of his frame; as a tender eye is injured by looking earnestly for any time on one object. Many people are of an open, unguarded

guarded temper, by which they are so strongly influenced, that they never learn sufficiently to restrain it, notwithstanding the repeated experience of the great inconveniences which it occasions. This is almost a constant characteristick of the poet. Warmly actuated by his present ideas, he communicates his most important designs, his sympathies, and antipathies, his affections, and resentments, to persons with whom it is improper to lodge his secrets, without any regard to consequences; and thus he loses many considerable advantages, many sincere and weighty friends, by the treachery of his companions.

To extenuate this absurdity in some degree, it must be observed, that it partly proceeds from his ingenuous and unsuspecting nature. He is above perfidy himself, and therefore he is slow to imagine that it resides in the breast of another. Indeed he is so poor a politician in the common transactions of life, he hath so romantick a constitution, that he is apt to disdain the inferior morality, to confound prudence with cunning and pusillanimity, and to deem it unworthy the attention of a great mind.

He generally attributes to himself at least as great abilities as he possesses; he is sensible that poetical talents are rare, and that they are universally admired. Flushed with this consciousness, he hastily concludes that the favour of the Muses alone will secure him that love and esteem which may be conciliated, but which can never be seized; and that the world will be subdued by the power of numbers. He leaves others to make their way by the humble cultivation of candour and affability, who are incapable of advancing by nobler arts. He forgets that it is peculiarly incumbent upon *him* to acquire these modest virtues; for mankind are naturally hurt with

the splendour of shining talents; and affection is most willingly given to those who can never excite admiration. Thus he oftener complies with the impulse of sentiment than with the forms of the world; he is apt to refuse wealth and titles that respect which we may certainly pay them without meannefs, and deviates into haughtiness by avoiding servility. This behaviour, like his works, is unfortunately actuated by imagination. For whatever consequence the poet may have in his own opinion, he will find his genius a very unequal competitor with power and riches. They have a strong and universal influence; and they inherit it by long prescription. The poet can only amuse us for a few hours; but they can protect, and make us happy for life. The poet gives us only flowery, and chimerical amusement; but to them we are indebted for substantial conveniences and delights. It is his province to paint; it is theirs to realize.

The sensible reader will not suppose that I mean to affix this character, which I think belongs to poets in general, to every disciple of the Muses. No rules are more exceptionable than those by which we class the operations of the mind. Many individuals represent the unhappy bent of their constitution, the tendency of their profession, and the disposition of their nation. There are prudent poets, as there are uncorrupted ministers of state.

But I will venture farther to observe, that the more rapturous and sublime the soul of the poet is, the more evidently will he appropriate this description. The more vigorous his genius is, the weaker will be his conduct. Extreme sensibility is the source of great poetical talents; and extreme sensibility can only be checked by the most heroic virtue. I mean not that partial and feminine sensibility, by  
which



## EDMUND WALLER.

which we shiver at the least inclemency of weather, and tremble at the rustling of a leaf; but that fine and comprehensive sensibility, by which we are strongly impressed with the whole material and ideal world.

If poets are thus constituted, and act in this manner, we need not wonder that by far the greater number of them have been condemned to poverty and distress, from Homer to Dryden; that few of them have been ambassadors, and secretaries of state; that they have been left to shift for themselves, without generous patronage, and splendid connections; and that it is difficult to investigate the tenour of their lives.

But though in giving an account of a poet, we are often obliged to substitute loose anecdotes and precarious conjecture for distinct and connected narration, the life of the poet is not rarely in itself, in its own nature, unentertaining, and uninteresting. Is the display of a human phenomenon so insignificant to mankind? Do not the powers and exertion of his mind, his greatness, and his weakness, his ecstasick joys, and pungent sorrows, well deserve our attention? Is not his history productive of moral reflection? Does it not teach men of inferiour endowments, to survey the prodigy rather with compassion than with envy? Even his common and domestick manner is not a trifle; for even *there* genius influences him, and distinguishes him, though calmly and familiarly, from the rest of mankind. Are politics, war, the origin, and downfall of empires, grandeur, and royalty, more important objects to the generality of readers? No one will assert that they are, who can distinguish wonder from instruction, and splendour from use.



But however insignificant the life of a poet may be thought in itself, or however difficult to be known, the life of Waller, we may hope, will not be uninteresting to the generality of readers. We have accounts of him from better vouchers than report and conjecture; and we are not merely to view his poetical character. He inherited an affluent fortune, which facilitated his connections with the great, and diversified his situations; and he was a member of our legislature in a period unparalleled by history.

Edmund Waller was born on the third of March, in the year 1605, at Colehill, in the county of Hertford. He was the son of Robert Waller, esq. of Agmondesham, or Aymesham, in Buckinghamshire. Colehill is in the neighbourhood of Aymesham, though in a different county. His mother was sister to Hampden, the famous republican, who was killed at the battle of Chalgrave; and she was cousin to Oliver Cromwell.

His father was bred to the law; but after prosecuting that profession for a short time, he quitted and exchanged it for retirement.

The pedigree of our author deserves to be traced farther back; for it was not only conspicuous by wealth, but by the superiour lustre of virtue.

He was descended from the Wallers of Kent. In the Villare Cantium, we are told that Richard Waller, Esq. of Spendhurst, in that county, was an officer in the army of Henry the Fifth, when that monarch was at war with France; and that he signalized himself by taking prisoner Charles duke of Orleans, the French general, at the battle of Azincour. The same gentleman was sheriff of Kent in the sixteenth year of the reign of Henry the Sixth. From him was lineally descended Sir William Waller, who was sheriff of Kent, in the twenty-second year of the

the reign of Henry the Seventh; at which time, as tradition informs us, the family-estate was worth 7000 pounds a-year. But it was much reduced when that Sir William Waller of Kent succeeded to it, who was one of the Generals of the Parliament in the civil war, and cotemporary with Edmund Waller. At what time a younger son of this family removed from Kent into Buckinghamshire, we cannot determine; but it is supposed that he lived not very long before the poet, who was his lineal descendant.

Robert, the father of Edmund Waller, by his œconomy, and application to agriculture, had greatly improved his paternal estate. He died while his son was an infant, and left him heir to 3500 pounds a-year: a capital fortune in those days, when wealth was far less multiplied, and luxury far less refined than they are at present.

The care of young Waller's education devolved now upon his mother. She sent him to Eton-school, and to King's College in Cambridge. It appears that he very early discovered that acuteness of intellect, and elegance of imagination with which his poetry and eloquence were afterwards so eminently marked; for he obtained a seat in the House of Commons for Aymesham, when he was only sixteen years of age, \* in the third parliament of James the First. The right of Aymesham to send members to Parliament was then disputed; in such cases, however, representatives were returned, and allowed to sit in the House, *sub si'entio*, without the privilege of debating. † We find in Grey's Debates that sometimes a minor took his seat in the House of Commons under this restriction; and ‡ that Mr.

\* Grey's Debates, vol. I. p. 354.

† Ibid, p. 355.

‡ Life of Clarendon, vol. I. and II.

Waller fate when he was sixteen, is proved by his own words in the same debates. "I was but sixteen, says he, when I fate first; and sometimes it has been thought fit that young men may be early in councils, that they may be alive when others are dead." Hence lord Charendon, in his character of Waller, tells us, that he was nursed in Parliaments.

James dissolved his third Parliament\*, because it would not vote him the supplies which he, and his ministers demanded. On the day of its dissolution, Mr. Waller went to court, and saw the King dine in publick. That monarch, with his usual weakness, broached his arbitrary principles, which even then began to be unpopular, in the hearing of the circle. Dr. Andrews, bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Neale, bishop of Durham stood behind his Majesty's chair while he was at dinner. The king asked the two bishops if "he might not levy money upon his subjects when he wanted it, without applying to Parliament." Neale, without hesitation, replied,—“God forbid you might not! for you are the breath of our nostrils.”—The king then turned to the bishop of Winchester,—“Well, my lord, what say you?”—“Sir, replied Andrews, I am not skilled in parliamentary cases.” “No put-offs, my lord, said the king; answer me presently.”—“I think, then, said the bishop, it is lawful for your Majesty to take my brother Neale's money; for he makes you an offer of it.” This anecdote is worth inserting here, not only because it was propagated by Mr. Waller, who was a witness to the conversation, but as it shows us the complexion of those times, when a prelate could be

\* It met on Jan. 30, 1621.

guilty of sacrilege in publick without a blush, and prostitute to a king that scriptural language of humiliation which was only due to his creator. But liberty, in James's reign, only dawned upon our island.

Prince Charles, before he set sail for England, after having long solicited a marriage with the Infanta at the court of Spain, gave a magnificent entertainment on board the British admiral, in the Port of St. Andero, to some Spanish grandees who had escorted him from Madrid. In going a-shore with his guests, the Prince and they were almost lost in a violent storm. Mr. Waller, in the eighteenth year of his age, wrote his first Poem on this danger and escape of his royal Highness; a fine panegyrick, if we consider the youth of the author, the necessary imperfections of every first effort of genius, and the æra of our language in which it was composed. It is remarkable for its politeness, and delicacy of compliment; and for an elegance and richness of imagination, not without that luxuriance and redundancy which are rather promising than reprehensible in a young poet. In this piece, too, we meet with that unexpected, yet natural approximation, comparison, and contrast of different images, which characterize the writings of Waller; and *there* he, at once, and as it were instinctively, far excelled all the poets that went before him in giving grace and harmony to our decasyllable rhyme. We cannot reflect without surprize that Waller, and Pope, in the first exertion of their talents, and before the age at which the human mind is generally matured, surpassed all their predecessors in an easy and elegant flow of numbers, and to a degree of superiority, which, in the common progress of our improvements is only attained in a century. Who, merely from  
reading



reading a few stanzas of Spenser, and Waller's first production, could imagine that our Poet began to write only twenty-five years after the death of the author of the *Fairy Queen*?

We are told by Lord Clarendon, in his own life, that "Mr. Waller, at the age when other men used  
"to give over writing verses, (for he was near thirty  
"years of age, when he first engaged himself in that  
"exercise, at least that he was known to do so,) surprised the town with two, or three pieces of that  
"kind." The noble author likewise informs us, that, "from the selfishness of his disposition, he  
"devoted a great part of his youth to retirement,  
"and the improvement of his estate; and that he  
"was scarce ever heard of, till he had gotten a very  
"rich wife in the city."

These extracts from Clarendon seem inconsistent with the dates which we may most reasonably assign to the two poems which are the first and second in this edition of his works; and they are totally different from the account which is given of Waller's youth by the author of his life. He says, that, when he was but twenty-one years old, he was admired, and caressed at court, and by those who were most eminent for their learning, and taste, on account of his poetical genius.

But however unreasonable it may appear to suppose, that Mr. Waller suppressed two poems on two royal personages for many years, which if they had been known at court, would probably have promoted his interest, and gratified that ambition which is generally the concomitant of genius; we should rather abide by the former testimony, in its most rigid sense, than by the latter: Mr. Waller might not chuse to divulge his first compositions for reasons, of which we cannot now come to the knowledge.

The



The medium between extremes is often the truth. We may suppose, without torturing the meaning of lord Clarendon's words, that Waller's juvenile poems were perused by James and Charles, and a few courtiers, soon after they were composed; but that they were not printed till he was about the age of thirty. We may likewise conclude, that his youth was spent in retirement; that the principal object of his retirement was to accumulate wealth; but that in some of his rural and tranquil hours he invoked the muses; and that while he was intent on the improvement of his estate, he did not altogether neglect the cultivation of his genius.

The compilers of the *Biographia Britannica*, think it is absurd to suppose that our poet's first verses were only handed about in manuscript; or only printed without his name. Why such a supposition is absurd, or improbable, it is not easy to comprehend. Indeed, it is not necessary to suppose either the one case, or the other.

It shows great want of judgment in these gentlemen, or great injustice, to prefer to the authority of Hyde that of the author of Waller's life, an obscure and flat writer, often mistaken in dates, and who may therefore be suspected to have mistaken other facts. Clarendon was personally acquainted with Waller: to what stronger evidence then can we appeal than to his, for anecdotes of our author? The compilers of the *Biographia Britannica* insinuate that his account of him is partial. To this it may be answered, that lord Clarendon's integrity was inflexible in the most trying junctures, in times of the greatest corruption and profligacy; and therefore that it could not be warped by the slight temptation to falsity of Waller.

He

He obtained a seat in Parliament a second time, before he was at the age of manhood ; he was one of the representatives of the borough of Chipping-Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, in the first parliament of Charles the first, which met on the 18th of June, 1625. In the third, which met on the 17th of March, 1627, he was again elected for Aymesham. In the recess of this Parliament, in the year 1628, the duke of Buckingham was stabbed at Portsmouth, by Felton. The king received the news of this murder, while he was at publick service in the church of Southwick, about five miles distant from Portsmouth. He suffered not the tragical message to interrupt his devotion, which he continued to the end of the prayers with his usual composure and attention. A very striking proof of a determined and pious mind, if we consider the great affection which that monarch had for the duke, and the strong emotions of grief which he showed for his untimely death, as soon as he thought he might indulge them without a crime. Mr. Waller's muse inspired him on this occasion ; and the poem is worthy of the subject. He was then in the twenty-fourth year of his age.

During the long intermission of parliaments, from 1629 to 1640, Waller employed a great part of his time in the prosecution of his studies. He lived then at Beconsfield with his mother ; for the family house at Aymesham had gone to decay. Mr. Morley, at that time a student of Christ-church College in Oxford, was one of the politest scholars of the age. He was afterwards bishop of Winchester. This gentleman was related to our author ; and their love of letters produced an intimacy and friendship between them. Morley used often to visit Waller at Beconsfield, and assist him in his literary progress. He directed him in his choice of books ; he read with

with him the capital authors of antiquity ; he enlarged his understanding, and refined his taste.

But the man is not completed in the closet ; society finishes the work, and gives the ingenuous mind all that embellishment and dignity which it is capable of receiving. By an intercourse with the learned, the penetrating, and the virtuous, our knowledge is arranged, our best powers are called forth, and our best habits are formed, and established. Living examples make a more sensible, and durable impression than that which we receive from books : the soul is apt to grow torpid in the closet ; but in agreeable company it is kept in a brisk and pleasurable agitation ; its fire grows more ardent and pure by mixing with congenial fire ; it imitates, it emulates the greatness which it surveys with admiration.

Mr. Morley was not ignorant that these advantages result from good connexions. That his cousin, therefore, might gain all possible improvement, and rise to that consequence which he might derive from his uncommon abilities, he introduced him into lord \* Falkland's club.—“ He brought him, says “ lord Clarendon, into that company which was “ most celebrated for good conversation.”

We are told by the author of Waller's life, that Mr. Morley was in very wretched circumstances ; and that Mr. Waller was a member of this society, long before he and Mr. Morley were acquainted. That one evening after lord Falkland's club had met, they heard a noise in the street, and on inquiring the cause of it, were informed that a son of Ben

\* The members of this society were, Lord Falkland, Sir Francis Wenman, Mr. Chillingworth, Mr. Godolphin, and other illustrious men.

Jonson was arrested ; that the arrested person was called in, and was found to be Mr. Morley ; and that Mr. Waller offered to pay his debt, which was a hundred pounds, provided he would go and live with him at Beconsfield. To this condition, says the author, he agreed, retired with Waller into the country, superintended his studies for many years, and was, by him introduced to this learned and honourable fraternity.

This account, however, has certainly no authenticity, as it is contradicted by Clarendon.

But we must go some years back in our chronological series, to take a view of his matrimonial fortune.

Mr. Waller, and Mr. Crofts payed their addresses at the same time to Anne, the only daughter, and heiress of Richard Banks, esq. a very wealthy citizen of London. But Waller won the lady, though his rival was supported by the interest of the court, which, in those days, commonly insured success to the lover, in whose favour it interposed.

After this marriage he relaxed more frequently from the severity of studious retirement than before ; he lived more expensively, and mixed more with the world ; he became universally known for a man of politeness, learning, and wit.

We cannot, with precision, fix the exact time of his marriage ; we may, however, from comparing the different accounts of him, assign it to the twenty-fifth, or twenty-sixth year of his age. His lady lived with him but a short time ; she died in child bed.

Some years after the death of his wife (how many we cannot determine) he was deeply smitten with the charms of lady Dorothy Sydney, the eldest daughter of the earl of Leicester ; whom he celebrates under the name of Sacharissa. She was one of the first beauties



beauties of the age ; and the graces of her person were animated, and dignified with the accomplishments of her mind. On a woman of her delicate sentiments we might suppose that Waller's addresses would have made some impression ; but she rejected them with disdain. Perhaps she suppressed the sympathy which she felt, on account of the inferiority of his rank ; and suffered the caprice of fortune to tyrannize over a generous passion.

The modulation of Waller's verse is never finer than when it is softened by the languor of love. His application of the story of Apollo and Daphne to his unfortunate passion for Sacharissa, is one of the best amorous elegies in our language. The sentiments are peculiarly happy, and the versification is extremely harmonious. In the four following lines, he tenderly, and musically complains of the obduracy of his fair-one.

Yet what he sung in his immortal strain,  
Though unsuccessful, was not sung in vain ;  
All, but the nymph that should redress his wrong,  
Attend his passion, and approve his song.

The susceptible and poetical soul of Waller was racked with his hapless love ; and we find by a poem which he wrote at Penrhurst, the seat of the earl of Leicester, that he had determined to go abroad, that his mind might be employed by new objects and adventures, and that it might grow indifferent to the charming, but painful image of Sacharissa. We know not whither he went, nor if he put his design in execution. The writer of a narrative is apt to decide without any foundation or certainty ; let us avoid this error ; and be satisfied with conjecture when we are not warranted to assert.

The



The accurate Mr. Fenton thinks it probable that Mr. Waller took a voyage to the Bermuda, or Summer-islands with his friend the earl of Warwick. That nobleman and Waller were proprietors in those islands. I shall beg leave farther to suppose that he went thither to divert his mind from Sacharissa. It is likewise probable, that he wrote his poem intitled the Summer-islands but a short time before he set sail for the Bermudas. He gives us indeed so full, and picturesque a description of the climate, and produce of those islands, that one would imagine he had composed the poem after his return from them. But this opinion is precluded by a beautiful apostrophe at the close of the first canto. The poet, we may presume, had resolved on this voyage to the Bermudas; he had made himself previously acquainted with the history of that part of the world; and in his poem he gives us a glowing, and variegated picture of those happy islands which had often risen in strong and bright perspective to his warm, and luxuriant imagination. He anticipates the shades which are to embower him, and the fragrant breezes which he is to inhale; and with an inconsistency very natural to a lover, he intends to make the groves resound with the name of Sacharissa from whose cruelty he is about to fly.

\* O! how I long my careless limbs to lay  
Under the plantain's shade; and all the day

\* To this supposition, however, it may be reasonably objected, that Waller dwells upon love with so much pleasure in those verses, that we cannot imagine he was going to leave his country when he wrote them, to get rid of his passion. Perhaps his thought of taking a voyage, to fly from the rigour of his mistress, was only the fervour of poetical imagination thrown out in the poem which he wrote at Penshurst. Perhaps

business,

With amorous airs my fancy entertain,  
 Invoke the Muses, and improve my vein !  
 No passion there in my free breast should move,  
 None but the sweet, and best of passions, Love !  
 There while I sing, if gentle love be by,  
 That tunes my lute, and winds the strings so high ;  
 With the sweet sound of Sacharissa's name  
 I'll make the listening savages grow tame.

It was in the long intermission of parliaments that he fell in love with Sacharissa ; a circumstance which favours the probability of his having made this voyage, when he was enamoured of that lady.

In all the editions of Mr. Waller's Works preceding that of Mr. Fenton, his poem to the King on his Navy was placed the first. Some of the later editions add to its title, "*In the Year 1626*;" about ten years before the time when it was most probably written. The author of Waller's Life, misled by this false date, says, that he wrote the poem when Charles the first sent out a fleet against Spain under the command of lord Wimbleton. Mr. Fenton thinks that the fleet fitted out in the year 1635 to check the insolence of the Dutch, the command of which was given to the earl of Lindsey, might be the occasion of this poetical compliment to the king. Though he is rather of opinion that the year following should be its date, when Mr. Waller's great friend, the earl of Northumberland, was made admiral of the British navy. Either of these conjectures is well grounded. Mr. Waller was then thirty, or thirty-one years old, when he wrote this poem. If the old editors of our poet placed it

business, not love, was the cause of his going to the Bermudas, if he went thither at all. We must not lose sight of the severity of fact for the flowers of romance.

at the beginning, to tempt their readers to go on, they have certainly showed no great judgment ; for it is not one of the best of Mr. Waller's pieces. Its verse is smooth ; but its sentiments are more brilliant than just.

However vehement his passion for Sacharissa was, he was too volatile and gay to die a martyr to love, or to contract an obstinate melancholy for the cruel return which his passion met with from that inexorable lady. The immediate feelings of susceptible minds, when they are persecuted by fortune, are excruciating ; but they have many objects of pleasure as well as of pain ; and the vigour and fertility of their imagination often afford them a speedy refuge from calamity. Waller had his gaiety, his wit, his friends, his poetry, to console him ; and his affluent fortune productive of many enjoyments. The rigour of Sacharissa had not given him an antipathy against the sex ; he still felt their attraction ; the soul of the poet is in unison with beauty \*. He found

\* Since I used this expression I have met with a beautiful illustration of it from the elegant and sublime Akenfide, which, I hope, it will not be deemed impertinent to transcribe.

As Memnon's marble harp, renowned of old  
By fabling Nilus, to the quavering touch  
Of Titian's ray, with each repulsive string  
Consenting, sounded through the warbling air  
Unbidden strains ; even so did nature's hand  
To certain species of external things  
Attune the finer organs of the mind ;  
So the glad impulse of congenial powers  
Or of sweet sound, or *fair-proportion'd form,*  
*The grace of motion,* or the bloom of light,  
Thrills through Imagination's tender frame,  
From nerve to nerve ; all naked and alive

They

other nymphs more tractable than the haughty Sydney, and not unworthy of his love, and his encomiums. We find in his works many gallant addressees, many eulogies on the fair; and even before his ardent flame for Sacharissa had abated, a gentler fire was kindled in his breast by Amoret. Amoret was not a stranger to his passion for Sacharissa; he writes a beautiful Anacreontick ode to the latter, in which she and Sacharissa are the joint subjects of his praise; and such is Waller's delicacy and art in this poem, that Amoret must certainly have read her lover's eulogy of her rival without jealousy. This little composition is an original in its kind; it is full of elegant compliment; and it finely contrasts the striking and majestick charms of Sacharissa with the gentle and benign graces of Amoret. Mr. Fenton was the first who communicated to the world the real name of Amoret; he was told by Sheffield duke of Buckingham that she was the lady Sophia Murray.

Sacharissa, or lady Dorothy Sidney, was married in the year 1639 to lord Spenser, afterwards earl of Sunderland. He was a virtuous, accomplished, and gallant young nobleman. He put himself a volunteer in the king's troop at the battle of Newbury, and was killed by a canon-ball in the beginning of the engagement. This battle was fought on the 20th of September, 1643.

We shall here insert a letter written by Mr. Waller to lady Lucy Sidney on the marriage of lady Dorothy, her elder sister. It deserves to be copied;

They catch the spreading rays; till now the soul  
At length discloses every tuneful spring,  
To that harmonious movement from without  
Responsive.

*Pleasures of Imagination, B. I. v. 109.*



the turn of it is uncommon and lively. It gives us some knowledge of Waller's character ; and shows that his passion for Sacharissa, however strong, was not invincible.

MADAM,

**I**N this common joy at Penshurst I know none to whom complaints may come less unseasonable than to your ladyship ; the loss of a bed-fellow being almost equal to that of a mistress ; and therefore you ought at least to pardon, if you consent not to the imprecations of the deserted, which just heaven, no doubt, will hear.

May my lady Dorothy, if we may yet call her so, suffer as much, and have the like passion for this young lord, whom she has preferred to the rest of mankind, as others have had for her ; and may this love before the year go about, make her taste of the first curse imposed on womankind, the pains of becoming a mother. May her first-born be none of her own sex, nor so like her but that he may resemble her lord as much as herself.

May she that always affected silence and retiredness have the house filled with the noise and number of her children, and hereafter of her grand-children ; and then may she arrive at that great curse so much declined by fair ladies, old age. May she live to be very old, and yet seem young ; be told so by her glass, and have no aches to inform her of the truth ; and when she shall appear to be mortal, may her lord not mourn for her, but go hand in hand with her to that place, where we are told there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage ; that being there divorced, we all may have an equal interest in her again. My revenge being immortal, I wish all this may also befall their posterity to the world's end, and afterwards.



To you, madam, I wish all good things, and that this loss may, in good time, be happily supplied with a more constant bed-fellow of the other sex.

Madam, I humbly kiss your hands, and beg pardon for this trouble from

Your ladyship's most humble servant,

E. WALLER.

Most of the sentiments in this letter are just, and lively; the language is easy, and, in the main, proper and elegant. In a letter, or poem written a hundred and thirty years ago, we cannot expect that accuracy of thought and expression which we require in the compositions of our own times, without being hasty and fastidious, without neglecting the rules of candid, and liberal criticism.

The nation had now been many years without a parliament; the order of government was violated by an imprudent and ill-advised, though a virtuous king. Mr. Waller was not inactive in this torpor of government, but kept his mind in full play. As he was not called to the severe duties of a legislator, he dedicated his time to the lighter occupations, and the pleasures of a private gentleman. He passed this long vacation from state-affairs in the prosecution of his studies, in the exertion of his poetical talents, in rural improvements and amusements, and in the sweet reciprocations of society, and of love.

He was at this time detached from the court; and he had, on that account, the more leisure to pursue the employments and pleasures of domestic life. He disapproved of the disuse of parliaments, and the arbitrary taxing of the subject; and his love of liberty was cherished and heated by his connections, and by the prosecution of his uncle Hambden, for refusing to pay his proportion of ship-money. It appears from his speeches in parliament that his political

principles were moderate and just, however warm he may have been in supporting them, and however severely he may be accused of want of allegiance to his sovereign by the idolaters of royalty. In his attachment to the privileges of parliament, he forgot not the reverence due to majesty; he desired not to annul the prerogatives of the crown. His memory indeed would have been more venerable, if the steadiness of his conduct had corresponded with the excellence of his theory.

Charles at length called a parliament in the year 1640. It is termed the short parliament, because it met on the thirteenth of April, and was dissolved before the end of May.

The king's finances were exhausted, and he pressed this parliament for a speedy supply. Mr. Waller, elected for Aymesham, was determined to attack the late measures of the court, and to plead the cause of freedom. In a most animated speech, which is fortunately preserved, he proposed to the house, that the necessary subsidies should be granted to the king; but that before they were taken into consideration, the faults of administration should be examined and redressed, liberty confirmed, and property secured. Without rashly exaggerating the merit of this speech, we may assert that it was worthy to have been pronounced in the Roman Forum; its eloquence is flowing and nervous; its allusions are pertinent and striking; its wit is delicate and poignant; and it is invigorated throughout with irrefragable argument. It is a specimen of his political tenets, which does him honour with posterity, and evinces to us that he was equally an enemy to despotism and anarchy; that he meant not to abridge the legal power of the prince, though he strenuously vindicated the rights of the people.

Truth

Truth should be the sacred object of him who professes to communicate facts to the world ; it should over-rule every private consideration. It must therefore be observed, that the dignitaries of the church in the reign of Charles the first interfered too much in matters of government, and stimulated his passion for uncontrouled supremacy. Their conduct is mistaken by some, and palliated by others ; for they certainly poured poison into the ear of a deluded king ; otherwise Waller would not have charged them with this crime, would not have exposed it so particularly, and inveighed against it in a great part of this speech. “ I am sorry (says he in his spirited declamations against their pernicious counsels) that these men take no more care to gain our belief of those things which they tell us for our soul’s health ; when we know them so manifestly in the wrong in that which concerns the privileges of the people of England. But they gain preferment ; and then ’tis no matter whether they believe themselves, or are believed by others. But since they are so ready to let loose the consciences of their kings, we are the more carefully to provide for our protection against this pulpit-law by declaring and reinforcing the municipal laws of this kingdom.”

\* It must be owned, with regret, that the clergy have always been the abettors and instruments of ar-

\* We must observe, however, in justice to the church of England, that it was, not without reason, particularly tenacious of its power in the days of Charles the first ; for then it was most rudely and indecently attacked by the rustick, ignorant, and acrimonious sectaries. Power was never so ill employed by the church as it was by the dissenters. Laud was not subtle and cruel like the fanaticks ; he was only too fond of ex-

bitrary power, that they might have power themselves, and bask under the spreading and luxuriant shade of unlimited monarchy. Though they might have learned better from their divine master, whose life was a series of benevolence and humility, and who has warned them that *his kingdom is not of this world*.

“ There is no doubt (says the author of Waller’s life) but had Mr. Waller lived in an age when parliaments were frequent, he would have distinguished himself as much by his politicks, as by his poetry ; but his relation to the Hambden family inducing him to espouse the party which was against ship-money, and other practices in those times, he never was acceptable to the reigning favourites farther than his muse made him ; and this life of inaction is, perhaps, the occasion of his giving up so much of his time to poetry as he did. His love of poetry and indolence laid him open to the insinuations of others ; and, it may be, prevented his fixing so resolutely to any one party as to make him a favourite of either.”

Who could imagine that a man who was acquainted with the history of the times, had read our author’s two celebrated speeches, and therefore should have known his parliamentary character, would have given us this account of him ? Waller had great activity of mind as a statesman as well as a poet. It

ternal pomp, and the dignity of the church ; and he was honest if he was mistaken. The English clergy were too much gentlemen to triumph over misery. But we may judge how fit the people of the other party were to possess power, by their inhuman treatment of the heroic and immortal marquiss of Montrose, and by their insults offered to majesty expiring for the sake of conscience.



is evident that he had carefully studied, and knew the English constitution as well as any of his cotemporaries; therefore he could not be a dupe to political insinuation. And, to suppose, that he often wavered betwixt the two parties into which the nation was then divided, from the different impressions made upon him by those with whom he conversed, and which he easily admitted from his ignorance of government, the consequence of his indolence and love of poetry, is, to attribute his inconstancy to a cause equally unphilosophical and false.

The long parliament met on the third of November, 1640. Mr. Waller, in this parliament, represented Aymesham a third time. He was now warmly actuated with that general spirit of opposition to the measures of the court, which the abrupt dissolution of the preceding parliament, and other unpopular proceedings of the king and his ministers, had excited. But it does not appear that at this crisis he revolted from his duty to his sovereign, that he harboured, or encouraged any rebellious designs against him. He was, indeed, an industrious and ardent opposer of that irregular and violent administration of government, which deserved to be reprehended, and which, if he had not combated, he would have been unworthy of the trust reposed in him by his constituents, and indifferent to the welfare of the people of England. We cannot read the few specimens of Waller's oratorical powers which are transmitted to us, without regretting that several speeches which he probably made on interesting subjects, at the beginning of this active, bold, and factious parliament, are lost to posterity.

Sir Francis Crawley, a justice of the court of common-pleas, was one of the twelve judges, who, in the year 1636, had subscribed their opinion, that the

the king had a right to levy ship-money. This opinion was given in consequence of a letter sent them from his majesty, demanding their sentiments concerning the legality of that tax. He, likewise, with all the judges of England, excepting four, gave sentence against Mr. Hambden in the Exchequer-chamber, when that gentleman disputed at law with the crown its right to the imposition of ship-money. He was peculiarly industrious to subject the nation to that odious assessment. He declared in the court of Exchequer, and in the western circuit, that it was a right inherent in the crown, which an act of parliament could not annul. And he made many vehement and menacing speeches against those who refused to pay the ship-money.

For these misdemeanours he was impeached by the commons in the year 1641. Waller, at the opening of the parliament, had spoken with great warmth against ship-money. As the house, therefore, well knew his sentiments and abilities, they appointed him to deliver to the peers, and support the impeachment against Crawley. On the sixteenth of July, 1641, at a conference of the two houses in the Painted Chamber, he delivered the impeachment, and enforced it with a speech replete with the thunder and lightning of eloquence. It makes the arraignment of Crawley a memorable article in the annals of Britain.

Mr. Waller in this speech illustrates the situation of England at that time by a parallel drawn from the Roman history. There never was a happier application of learning. The mind of him who is not dead to the impressions of oratory, will yet be agitated with reading it, however indifferent he may be to the transactions and events of those times. What then must have been the feelings of a susceptible

tible person, who heard it delivered with the grace and elocution, and spirit of Waller.

“ I cannot, my lords, but take notice of the most  
 “ sad effect of this oppression, the ill influence it  
 “ has had upon the ancient reputation and valour  
 “ of the English nation. And no wonder; for if it  
 “ be true that oppression makes a wise man mad, it  
 “ may well suspend the courage of the valiant; the  
 “ same happened to the Romans, when for renown  
 “ in arms they most excelled the rest of the world.  
 “ The story is but short; ’twas in the time of the  
 “ Decemviri (and I think the chief troublers of our  
 “ state may make up that number). The Decem-  
 “ viri, my lords, had subverted the laws, suspended  
 “ the courts of justice, and (which was the greatest  
 “ grievance both to the nobility and people) had  
 “ for some years omitted to assemble the senate,  
 “ which was their parliament: this, says the his-  
 “ torian, did not only deject the Romans, and make  
 “ them despair of their liberty, but caused them to  
 “ be less valued by their neighbours: the Sabines  
 “ take the advantage, and invade them, and now  
 “ the Decemviri are forced to call the long-desired  
 “ senate, whereof the people were so glad that—  
 “ *Hostibus belloque gratiam habuerunt*—“ They  
 “ thanked their enemies and the war.” This af-  
 “ fectably breaks up in discontent; nevertheless the  
 “ war proceeds; forces are raised, led by some of  
 “ the Decemviri, and with the Sabines they meet in  
 “ the field. I know your lordships expect the event.  
 “ My author’s words of his countrymen are these—  
 “ *Ne quid ductu, aut auspicijs Decemvirorum prof-*  
 “ *pere gereretur, vinci se patiebantur.*—“ They  
 “ suffered themselves to be conquered, that nothing  
 “ might prosper under the auspices of the Decem-  
 “ viri.”—They chose rather a present diminution of  
 “ their

“ their honour, than by victory to confirm the ty-  
 “ ranny of their new masters. At their return from  
 “ this unfortunate expedition, after some distem-  
 “ pers and expostulations of the people, another se-  
 “ nate, that is, a second parliament, is called ; and  
 “ there the Decemviri are questioned, imprisoned,  
 “ deprived of their authority, and some lose their  
 “ lives ; and soon after this vindication of their li-  
 “ berties, the Romans, by their better success, made  
 “ it appear to the world, that liberty and courage  
 “ dwell always in the same breast, and are never to  
 “ be divorced. No doubt, my lords, but your just-  
 “ tice shall have the like effect upon this dispirited  
 “ people. ’Tis not the restitution of our ancient  
 “ laws alone, but the restoration of our ancient  
 “ courage which is expected from your lordships. I  
 “ need not say any thing to move your just indigna-  
 “ tion, that this man should so cheaply give away  
 “ that which your noble ancestours, with so much  
 “ courage and industry had so long maintained. You  
 “ have often been told how careful they were,  
 “ though with the hazard of their lives and for-  
 “ tunes, to derive those rights and liberties as en-  
 “ tire to posterity as they received them from their  
 “ fathers. What they did with labour you may do  
 “ with ease : what they did with danger you may do  
 “ securely ; the foundation of our laws is not shaken  
 “ with the engine of war ; they are only blasted  
 “ with the breath of these men ; and by your breath  
 “ they may be restored.”

This speech was published, universally read and  
 admired ; the authour of Waller’s Life says that  
 twenty thousand copies of it were sold in a day.  
 But it did not effect its purpose. No punishment  
 was inflicted upon Crawley.

The



The Biographia Britannica observes that this Speech of Waller and the former *have rendered it doubtful whether* the sweet or four passions *were most in his nature*. The character of a great man is sure to be mangled when it falls into the hands of frigid compilers. Sourness and asperity of temper are certainly very absurdly attributed to Mr. Waller, for his generous defence of civil and political freedom.

I must beg leave to differ in opinion from a more respectable authority. Mr. Fenton does too much honour to the memory of justice Crawley, by pronouncing him a man of integrity; an encomium which, by the account that has been given of him, he surely did not deserve. He accuses the parliament of presumption for its resentment against the judges in the reign of Charles the first, though it appears that they promoted oppression, violated the oath which they took to observe the due administration of justice, and were the sycophants of majesty. He undistinguishingly approves the conduct of Charles, and rashly charges \* Waller with being engaged in turbulence and faction for his speech against Crawley, which reflects much credit upon his memory, the occasion of it considered. Mr. Fenton, in his comment upon this speech, betrays a partiality to the royal cause. Few are discriminating and moderate in examining those times of passion and confusion.

\* He is, however, accused by Echard of having first proposed in 1641, one of the most remarkable and unconstitutional expedients of this parliament.

"An act was made that this parliament should not be adjourned, prorogued, or dissolved, without their own consent. We are assured that the first motion of this was made by Mr. Waller to the leading members." *Echard's History of England*, Book II. Chap. i. *Article 4th.*—Anno 1641.

Yet

Yet I hope I shall be allowed the merit of endeavouring to adhere to truth. I should be as loth to condemn the parliament for asserting their invaded privileges, as to justify their insolence and usurpation of the rights of the crown; or to adopt the extravagance of licentious and barbarous politicians, and, in contradiction to the genuine sentiments of human nature, and with a shameful abuse of language call the murder of a pious and unfortunate king, an eminent act of justice.

Waller about this time acquired a very great political reputation. He vindicated the rights of the people, but he likewise supported the dignity and authority of the crown; he had chosen that just and virtuous medium, to which it is so difficult to adhere in times of tumult, fanaticism, and rebellion.

When the proceedings of the house were grown extremely violent and licentious, he so much disliked them that he absented himself from it for some time.

There was now an open rupture between the king and his parliament. His majesty erected his standard at Nottingham, on the twenty-second of August, 1642. Mr. Waller sent the king a thousand broad pieces on this occasion; an indisputable proof that he wished well to his cause. He corresponded with the principal people about his person; and by applying to them, he got the royal leave to return to parliament. This permission, we may suppose, was very readily granted to Waller; as it might be expected that he would be of great service to Charles in the house, by his affection for his cause, and by the force of his eloquence.

How boldly he opposed the measures of the commons on his return to the parliament, we may collect from the following anecdote. Some wary and

timid

\* See

timid members, afraid to encounter the civil storm, had dropt their attendance at the house. When they were asked the cause of their absence, they replied, "That they did not chuse to go thither, because it would be dangerous for them to speak their sentiments." They were answered, "That their excuse was frivolous; for it was well known that Mr. Waller spoke there every day with the greatest freedom, and yet with impunity \*."

Lord Clarendon informs us that the moderate men, and the king's friends had such confidence in Mr. Waller that they freely communicated to him their opinions of the transactions of the times, and concerted measures with him for the re-establishment of the publick tranquillity. They relied as much on his fidelity and caution as on his abilities and dexterity. Besides, adds the noble historian, they might have a political view in consulting with him; for they knew that his report to the king of their good dispositions towards him would make a very strong impression on his majesty in their favour. Hence it is evident that Charles at this time had a great esteem for Waller.

He conducted himself so prudently betwixt the two parties, that he was likewise a man of great weight with the parliament, and one whom they trusted with the management of important affairs.

Soon after the battle of Edge Hill, which was fought on the twenty-third of October, 1642, the king retired to Oxford. In the same year the parliament sent a committee thither to the king with proposals of peace, and Mr. Waller was one of the commissioners. We must not omit the remarkable compliment which was payed him by his majesty on

\* See Clarendon's History of the Rebellion, B. VII.  
that

that occasion. The commissioners were received by the king in the garden of Christ-church. Waller was the lowest of them in rank, and therefore presented to him the last. After he had kissed his hand, Charles looked at him with complacency, and said, "Though you are the last, yet you are not the worst, nor the least in my favour."

The truth of this anecdote we cannot question ; for it is related by Whitelocke †, who was one of the commissioners. But though that author's veracity is not to be doubted, we must lay no stress on the judgment which he forms upon this fact. He twice asserts, that it is evident from the good reception which Waller met with from the king at Oxford, that he was then forming the plot for his majesty's interest, which was detected soon after the return of the commissioners to London. But is it likely that Charles, though imprudent in more complicated cases, should so far mistake his proper behaviour to Waller at Oxford, if he then knew that he had entered into an association against his enemies, as to take particular notice of him on that account, and consequently mark him out for a victim of the parliament's resentment, if his designs miscarried ? The reader will see by what is above related, that he was entitled to this benign reception from the king for his past services, for his zeal for prerogative as well as for privilege, and for adhering to his allegiance, notwithstanding the defection of many.

Whitelocke's opinion in this matter is so remote from probability, that its contrary seems to be the truth ; and instead of supposing with him that Waller's plot, then in agitation, was the cause of the king's affability to him, we may more reasonably

† See Whitelocke's Memoirs, in the year 1642.



presume that this affability was the cause of the plot ; that it deeply affected the susceptibility of Waller ; that it made him think he had done too little for so indulgent, and generous a monarch ; and urged him to venture upon an enterprize for the royal cause, which, afterwards, in imminent danger, he had not fortitude enough to avow.

We are now come to this plot in the series of time. It was formed, and discovered, in the year 1643. Historians, to distinguish it from the many real and pretended confederacies of the times, call it Waller's plot ; because by him it was principally promoted and concerted. I shall endeavour to give a clear and comprehensive account of it, not obscured by brevity, nor weakened by minuteness. It would be doing injustice to our readers only to take superficial notice of a fact so prominent in our history. Its consequences, indeed, are more important than itself, as it proved abortive ; they strongly mark the character of the age, the hypocritical art of the parliament, and the blind credulity of the people. This plot has contributed to the diffusion of the name of Waller ; and made it known to many who have only been endowed with historical memory ; and in whose minds the recollection of it could never excite poetical sentiment.

Mr. Tomkins, clerk of the queen's council, had married Mr. Waller's sister. He was a gentleman of good reputation, and very intimate with those in the city, who were well affected to the king. Waller and he agreed to inform each other, and such persons as they might trust, what members of the two houses, and what people of credit in the city were disgusted with the incroachments and violence of the parliament, and likely to enter into a spirited undertaking for the service of their sovereign. Wal-

ler informed Tomkins of the lords and commons, and Tomkins told Waller the names of the reputable citizens who wished for the restoration of regular government: and each of them propagated his respective intelligence amongst his friends, who were attached to the same cause.

Mr. Chaloner, a friend of Tomkins, was a principal agent in this plot; it was likewise honoured with noble associates; the earls of Northumberland and Portland, and lord Conway, were privy to it, and supported it.

A particular rule was to be observed in conducting it. Only three persons were to meet to discourse upon it at a time. Each of these three might communicate it only to two more, who, he thought, might be safely entrusted with it. This precaution was agreed upon, that every individual in the plot, being in personal confidence with but a few, there might be the less danger of information; and that the suspicion might be avoided, which numerous meetings might excite: that they might be guarded against treachery from within, and discovery from without.

The design of this combination was so mild, that, as Mr. Hume observes, it might with more justice be stiled a project than a plot. Their aim was not to attack the parliament with that ardour and violence which they deserved; but to gain a powerful party in the two houses, and in the city, which might oppose the arbitrary taxations of the commons, remonstrate against them, bring about a peace, and restore the legal authority of the crown.

Lord Conway, however, suggested to Mr. Waller, that policy should be supported with force, and that they ought not to neglect a military resource, lest by some unlucky accident they should be exposed to all  
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the fury and rigour of parliamentary resentment. This proposal of lord Conway is imputed by historians to his enterprising temper, and his martial spirit. But it seems to have been a very reasonable and necessary one: it was natural to fear that if the parliament should discover this confederacy before it was mature, they would give no quarter to an association which had intended to cut off their pecuniary supplies, the sinews of war, and to espouse the interest of the king, no matter by how gentle methods. What lenity was to be expected from obstinate, gloomy, and cruel usurpation?

Lord Conway's advice made a due impression upon Waller. He imparted it to his friend Tomkins, and pressed him to use his endeavours for the execution of it. Tomkins was active in his turn; through him it was propagated in the city; and *there* it was agreed that some well-affected persons in every parish, and ward of London, should make a list of all the inhabitants. Hence they might know how many friends they would have to support them, and how many enemies to oppose in case of emergency. For at that time it was easy to find the bias of almost every individual; when the minds of men were irritated to frankness by the virulence of party.

Mr. Waller and Mr. Tomkins had unfortunately spoken some words in the hearing of a servant of the latter, which made him suspect that they had some extraordinary political design in agitation. At their next meeting he placed himself behind the hangings of the apartment in which they conferred, and overheard a full discussion of their secret. Immediately afterwards he went to Mr. Pym, and informed him of what he had heard, not probably without considerable additions to the truth, that his reward might be in proportion to the importance of his

his discovery. Pym contrived that this intelligence should be ushered to the publick in as alarming a manner as was possible; and he prepared them for the reception of it by the following artifice. A letter was brought him to St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, when the house of commons were at publick worship there, on Wednesday the 31st of May, 1643, a solemn fast day which they had appointed. He opened the letter, looked amazed, whispered to two or three of the leading members, and went out of the church with them. After service the houses met; they were informed of a dreadful conspiracy against the parliament and the city; they appointed a committee, who were to apprehend and examine whomever they might have reason to suspect. Waller and Tomkins were made prisoners that night.

Waller was no sooner seized than death in all its terrours was anticipated by his lively imagination. The susceptible soul, which had often been deeply impressed with objects of pleasure, not sufficiently fortified by philosophy, now gave way to its natural weakness, and was appalled at the view of that last crisis, which manly and well-disciplined minds can survey with tranquillity. When he was brought before the committee he betrayed the pusillanimity of a child; and in the precipitance of his fear, to atone in some measure for his conduct, made an ample and ungenerous confession. He told his examiners, without hesitation that the earls of Northumberland and Portland, and lord Conway, were his accomplices; and brought accusations against persons who were strangers to the fact in question. He charged some ladies of distinction with disaffection to the Commons, not without giving their names, and titles; and informed the committee that he had often been  
solicited



solicited by them to oppose the proceedings of the Parliament. Those ladies loved his company; they esteemed and admired him on account of his popularity, and wit.

After the examination of Waller, the committee examined Tomkins, and Chaloner, and some others of their prisoners, who they thought would give them the most material information. It will be proper here to give an account of another plot which they discovered at this time, and of which they availed themselves to justify their severity to Waller, and his associates.

Sir Nicholas Crispe, a wealthy merchant, and citizen of London, and a gentleman of great activity and spirit, was a zealous friend of the King, and consequently much disliked by the parliament. He was a commander of the trained bands in the city; but that office was taken from him by an ordinance of the militia. He used his open, and strenuous endeavours in the city, to procure a petition for peace; the parliament commenced a prosecution against him on that account; and to avoid the effects of their resentment, he fled to Oxford.

Opposition, and disappointment only inflamed the loyalty of Crispe. He corresponded with his friends in London; and at their instigation, or from his own sanguine and enterprising temper, he requested the king to grant a commission of array to some persons in *that* city whom he would pitch upon, who, he knew, had great influence, and were firmly attached to his majesty; and on whose prudence, and caution, as well as power and affection he could safely rely. He farther urged his proposal by assuring him, that, if an accommodation between him and the parliament should prove impracticable, a considerable body of men should be ready to act for him

him in the ensuing summer, in virtue of this commission ; that they should appear in arms in and about London ; that the royal army might easily join them ; that the parliament would be brought to proper submission by that junction, and peace and order restored to the kingdom.

Though Charles thought the scheme carried with it no probability of success when it was first proposed to him, he was at length determined to embrace it, by the confidence and persuasions of Crispe. He ordered him to make out the commission of array, and to name in it what persons he thought proper. It was accordingly drawn up, and duly authenticated. This affair was transacted in profound secrecy ; it was not imparted to any of the king's ministers, or counsellors.

The parliament had granted lady Aubigney a pass to go to Oxford, to settle some business with the king, in consequence of the death of her husband, who was killed at the battle of Edge-Hill ; with this lady his majesty entrusted the commission enclosed in a box. He did not acquaint her with the contents, but told her that they were of great consequence to him. He desired her to deliver the box to a person in London who would wait upon her to receive it, and who would produce a token which was to be sent him, that she might give it to him without scruple, which token the king then showed her.

How the committee discovered this commission of array, we cannot even conjecture, for it was unknown to lord Clarendon. Mr. Waller was acquainted with lady Aubigney, and often visited her : but how could she disclose a secret to him, or indeed, to any one besides, of which, we may conclude, she was ignorant herself ?

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By whatever persons, and means this project of Sir Nicholas Crispe was discovered, the committee who examined Waller and his associates were made acquainted with it, and it was by them communicated to the parliament, and the city. The commons, the more to exasperate the minds of the public against Mr. Waller, and his friends, artfully blended the two plots, and gave the town a most alarming account of them. They gave out that the principal intentions of the conspirators, were,—To seize into their custody the king's children—to seize several members of both Houses; the lord mayor, and committee of the militia, that they might bring them, as they pretended, to a legal trial—to seize the outworks, forts, tower of London, magazines, gates, and other places of importance in the city—to let in the king's troops to surprise the city, and to destroy all those who should oppose them by the authority of the parliament—to dispute the payment of parliamentary taxes by force of arms—to suspend, if not alter the whole government of the city; and by the assistance of the king's army, to intimidate the parliament, and bring it to their terms.

I shall not detain the reader with a minute account of all the charges which were brought by the parliament against Waller and his confederates. They would be uninteresting and insipid, and probably in a great measure false. He who desires to see a detail of this plot, and thinks a narrative true, if it be circumstantial, may have his curiosity gratified by the substance of a long speech made by Mr. Pym, to the lord mayor and citizens at a common hall on the eighteenth of June, 1643, which he will find in the *Biographia Britannica*. The account to which I refer, though it is an abridgment of the speech,

is a specimen of the dryness and prolixity of that artful demagogue. The authors of the *Biographia* say, that the most authentick account of this plot is given by Mr. Pym; as if the world did not know that he was a most prejudiced, and bigoted partizan, and was watchful and industrious to aggravate any fact which tended to make the royal cause more unpopular.

In his speech to the citizens, he gave a dreadful account of the plot; he said it was contrived for the destruction of the army, the parliament, and the city.

The commons, having raised a general alarm, appointed a day of public thanksgiving for their great delivery; to make the people imagine that their cause was espoused by heaven, that their pious gratitude entitled them to its protection;—and, as Lord Clarendon observes, to make the great delivery unquestionable.

To ratify these proceedings, and to give them effect, they drew up a solemn league and covenant, which was taken by every member of both houses, by the army, and by the city. To many people the tenour of it gave qualms, which were suppressed by example, and by fear. Lord Clarendon, in his history, hath transmitted us a copy of this league and covenant; they who framed it, accumulate guilt, while they express a whining sorrow for past offences; the preamble is falsehood and hypocrisy; the oath is sedition and rebellion.

All this religious grimace was portentous to the conspirators, and threw a gloom over their trial. Mr. Tomkins, Mr. Chaloner, and Mr. Hambden, a gentleman who carried messages, and letters between the conspirators, and the court at Oxford, were tried by a council of war. Hassel, another messenger,



messenger, died in prison the night before the trial. Tomkins was condemned to be hanged before his house in Holborne, where he had long lived, and maintained an excellent character. Chaloner was to suffer the same fate in Cornhill. Their sentences were executed with many circumstances of barbarity. As Waller was the only evidence against Mr. *Hambden*, they spared *his* life; but he died in confinement: though that lenity, perhaps, was shown him because he was related to the patriot. Some gentlemen, too, whose names were in the commission of array, and who were tried at this time, had the good fortune not to suffer capitally, as it did not appear that their names had been used with their consent, or knowledge. But they were branded with the title of malignants, and their estates were confiscated.

The commons were very desirous to proceed with equal severity against the earl of Portland, and lord Conway, who were in close confinement. But Waller was their only accuser; he and they were often confronted before the committee; and they as repeatedly, and peremptorily denied the charge of privacy to the plot, as he retorted it upon them. They were kept in prison a considerable time; but were, at length, enlarged upon bail.

The earl of Northumberland obtained his freedom with more ease. The commons were violently incensed against him, for they knew that he was much disgusted with their measures. Their prudence, however, checked their resentment. For the earl was a favourite of the publick.

Waller was a more active offender against the commons than his two friends who suffered capital punishment. But he met with a gentler fate than theirs by means which have sullied his memory.

The

The excellence of the poet shall not redeem the meanness of the man.

He was now a prisoner of the council of war, by whom he was to be tried. His trial had been put off out of pity to his situation: for he expressed, in his confinement, the most abject, and vehement repentance for his crime. He even feigned distraction to mollify his judges: though, from his excessive fear, there was, perhaps, little imitation in his madness. He sent to the fanatical ministers of the sectaries, and requested their ghostly assistance. The elegant soul of Waller, formed for poetry, and for love, seemed to imbibe their rustick jargon, and thanked them with humility and ardour for the spiritual illumination which they poured upon his mind. He neglected not to make considerable presents to those holy men, by which probably he won more upon *their* hearts than they gained upon *his* by their pious exhortations. He likewise gave great sums to the leading members in the house of commons; who were very sensible to this pathetic application, and, in consequence of it, were industrious to save him. Their influence operated strongly in his favour. The preachers too, whom he had bought, warmly recommended him to mercy; and their recommendation had much weight; for fanaticism was then oracular.

After his repeated requests, which were supported by powerful interest, he was admitted to the bar of the house of commons on the fourth of July, 1643, to speak in his own defence. The speech, which he then made, does honour to his learning, and eloquence, while it convicts him of the most timid, and servile pusillanimity. In it he intreats the commons that *they* would try him, and not expose him to the sanguinary decision of a council of war; he shows  
the

the inconveniences which might befall themselves, if they should suffer his fate to be determined by military arbitration; and laments the crime which he had committed in the vulgar, and blasphemous cant of a presbyterian minister. In his speech against judge Crawley, he made an artful, and striking application from Roman history to the argument he was enforcing; in his speech for himself he makes an application of the same kind.

“ I dare confidently say, you shall find none, either  
 “ ancient, or modern, whoever exposed any of their  
 “ own order to be tried for his life by the officers of  
 “ their armies abroad, for what he did while he re-  
 “ sided among them in the senate.

“ Among the Romans the practice was so contra-  
 “ ry, that some inferiour officers in the army, far  
 “ from the city, having been sentenced by their  
 “ general, or commander in chief, as deserving  
 “ death by their discipline of war, have, neverthe-  
 “ less, because they were senators, appealed thither,  
 “ and the cause has received a new hearing in the  
 “ senate.”

In the following extract he apologizes for his conduct in the true strain of a fanatick.

“ What it was that moved me to entertain dis-  
 “ course of this business (the plot) so far as I did, I  
 “ will tell you ingenuously, and that rather as a  
 “ warning for others, than that it makes any thing  
 “ for myself; it was only an impatience of the in-  
 “ conveniences of the present war, looking on things  
 “ with a carnal eye, and not minding that which  
 “ chiefly, if not only, ought to have been considered,  
 “ the inestimable value of the cause you have in  
 “ hand, the cause of God, and of religion, and the  
 “ necessities you are forced upon for the mainten-  
 “ ance of the same. As a just punishment for this  
 “ neglect,

“ neglect, it pleased God to desert, and suffer me  
 “ with a fatal blindness, to be led on, and engaged  
 “ in such counsels as were wholly disproportioned  
 “ to the rest of my life. This, sir, my own con-  
 “ science tells me was the cause of my failing, and  
 “ not malice, or any ill habit of mind, or disposition  
 “ toward the commonwealth, or to the parliament.”

To this speech, his other intercessions, and his bribes, he owed his life. He was fined the sum of ten thousand pounds by the parliament, and banished the kingdom for life.

I must beg leave to make an observation or two on this account of Waller's plot.

I have been principally guided by lord Clarendon's relation of the affair; because it seemed preferable, in the main, to those of the other historians. We are not however to rely implicitly upon his authority.

He is satisfied that Mr. Waller's scheme, and Sir Nicholas Crispe's were not at all connected with each other. His reason for this opinion, is, that Waller, and the principal persons concerned in his plot, were not named in the commission of array. This argument, I think, is not conclusive. Waller and his friends might act in conjunction with Crispe's correspondents in London, and yet might not chuse to have their names inserted in the commission of array, lest it should be intercepted by the parliament.

The commission of array was made publick when Waller, Tomkins, and Chaloner were examined. Lord Clarendon says, it was then discovered to the committee, or they kept it concealed till that time. But about that time they must have been informed of it. For, is it probable that they would be dilatory in publishing it, as the intelligence, when divulged,

would



would throw fresh odium upon the king, and his friends? From these circumstances we may conjecture that the discovery of the commission of array was a consequence of the detection of Waller's plot, and that he was acquainted with Crispe's plan, and took some part in it: a paragraph in Waller's speech is favourable to this supposition.

"For so much as concerns myself, and my part in this business (if I were worthy to have any thing spoken, or patiently heard in my behalf) this might truly be said, that I made not this business, but found it; it was in other men's hands long before it was brought to me, and when it came, I extended it not, but restrained it. For the propositions of letting in part of the king's army, or offering violence to the members of this house, I ever disallowed, and utterly rejected them."

If Crispe's project is here alluded to, it was, perhaps more warm, and adventurous, than lord Clarendon allows it to have been.

It appears by the noble historian's account, that Waller was not tried by the council of war, but only by the parliament. This account is strengthened by Waller's speech in his own defence. And yet it is absolutely contradicted by Whitelocke's Memoirs, and the \* Parliamentary History. Both these authorities inform us, that Waller was condemned to be hanged by the council of war, but got a reprieve from the earl of Essex, the general of the parliament's army. We cannot come at the truth of past facts, when they are so differently related by respectable authors. Perhaps he was tried, and condemned by

\* See Parliamentary History, under the year 1643. Whitelock's Memorials under the same year.

the council of war, after he had made his speech at the bar of the house of commons. This being admitted, he was reprieved by Essex, and according to Whitelocke, after having continued a year in prison, he was rejudged by the parliament, by them condemned to pay a fine of ten thousand pounds, and banished the kingdom. If this is the truth, he was banished in the year 1644. Besides his fine of ten thousand pounds, he expended at least twenty thousand to procure the lenity of the parliament.

The author of Waller's life, very injudiciously, and in contradiction to history, says "that though this plot was discovered, it was an advantage to the king, by producing that severe vow, and covenant, which few swallowed but by compulsion, and many to avoid it fled to Oxford, whither also the earl of Portland and the lord Conway went as soon as they had an opportunity." \* On the contrary, lord Clarendon informs us, that though the novelty and boldness of the league and covenant startled many, there were but few, in comparison, who refused to take it; that it more clearly distinguished to the parliament their friends from their foes, and disposed them to more determined, and violent measures. They had now openly, and formally declared their rebellion, they were therefore to proceed vigorously; they were not to think of a retreat. We might have inferred by reason what history authorises us to assert, that the discovery of Waller's plot administered fuel to the flame of civil war; and greatly injured the king as well as its contriver.

Waller lived in France during his exile. He went first to Rouen in Normandy, where he resided for

\* See Clarendon's History of the Rebellion. b. vii.

some \* years. Margaret, his eldest daughter by his second wife, Mary, of the family of Bresse, or Breaux, was born in that city. The year of his second marriage has not been transmitted to us; but it is generally supposed that it was near the time of his plot. This eldest daughter was his favourite, of his female children; and when she grew up she was his amanuensis.

He passed the latter years of his exile at Paris; where he lived in gaiety, and elegance; in the society of people of rank, and of those who were distinguished for their learning and their wit. His hospitality was even magnificent. No Englishman's table at Paris was so sumptuous as Mr. Waller's, except that of lord St. Alban's, who was the queen of England's prime minister when she kept her court there.

From this liberal, and splendid hospitality we may conclude, that lord Clarendon was mistaken in charging him with narrowness in the early part of his life. For avarice increases with age; and the soul of the miser becomes more contracted by pecuniary misfortunes.

But Waller did not sink under his severe fate. He not only retained the spirit of conversation, politeness, and hospitality; but had vigour of mind enough to exert his poetical genius. Perhaps this serenity and composure were more the result of that enjoyment which a susceptible constitution is apt to feel from present resources than of the efforts of philosophy.

In the beginning of 1650, and in the forty-fifth year of his age, he wrote a new year's poetical epistle to the countess of Morton, who was then at Paris

\* The greater part of the time of his banishment, says the author of his life.

This lady conveyed the princess Henrietta, daughter of Charles the first, to France, in the year 1646. Her escape with her royal charge is celebrated in this poem, which has great merit: it contains polite compliment, pertinent historical allusions, and striking similes. At the conclusion, where the poet's fancy anticipates the future power of prince Charles, and the charms of Henrietta, the dominion of royalty, and beauty are finely contrasted.

Born in the storms of war, this royal fair,  
 (Produced like lightning in tempestuous air)  
 Though now she flies her native isle, less kind,  
 Less safe for her than either sea, or wind,  
 Shall, when the blossom of her beauty's blown,  
 See her great brother on the British throne,  
 Where peace shall smile, and no dispute arise,  
 But which rules most, his sceptre, or her eyes.

In this poem, and in his epitaph on colonel Charles Cavendish, which he likewise wrote in his banishment, he inveighs against the rebels, and reminds us that the abject speech which he made at the bar of the house of commons, in which he regrets his attempt to serve the king, as a most impious undertaking, and pronounces their cause the cause of religion, and of God, was totally an artifice to save his life, and directly opposite to the sentiments of his heart.

Soon after he was banished, an English lady of his acquaintance desired him to collect his poems, and send them to her from France. He complied with her request, and they were published in the year 1645. A letter was prefixed to the poems when they were printed, which he sent with them to the lady; but, as Mr. Fenton observes, it seems not to have been intended for a publick dedication. It is evident that



that when he wrote that letter, he had recovered all his chearfulness, and vivacity. This first edition of Mr. Waller's poetry was entitled—"Poems, written by Edmund Waller, of Beconsfield, Esq. lately a member of the Honourable House of Commons," and there was added in the title-page—"All the Lyrick poems in this book were set by Mr. Henry Lawes, of the king's chapel, and one of his majesty's private musick." In his letter to the lady he tells her that he had bid adieu to poetry; but that resolution he afterwards dropt, and greatly augmented his poetical collection. Who this female correspondent was, to whom the world owed the first publication of Waller's poems, Mr. Fenton could not discover.

His principal fund while he abode at Paris, was his wife's jewels; a fund, which his elegant manner of living for some years had almost exhausted. His gaiety, however, was not suppressed by his bad circumstances: he jocularly told his friends that he was come to the rump-jewel.

As his finances were so low, it behoved him to endeavour to procure a repeal of the sentence which had sequestered his fortune, and condemned him to banishment for life. For this purpose he applied to colonel Scroope; who had married his sister, and had considerable interest with Cromwell, who was now the absolute master of England. At that gentleman's intercession, the protector gave him leave to return to his native country, and to the possession of his estate, which was now not half of what it was worth when it was left him by his father. Yet he had fifteen hundred pounds a year still remaining, which, at that time, enabled a gentleman to live with elegance, and splendour.

In 1654, the year in which he returned to England, he wrote his panegyrick on Oliver Cromwell. A beautiful, and spirited composition, in which the  
d harmony,

## THE LIFE OF

harmony, and delicate graces of Waller are elevated with the dignity of the epick strain. His description of the privileges and power of Britain, in this poem, is picturesque, and animated ; it claims our admiration as justly, as his fulsome praise of Cromwell deserves our contempt. One can hardly suppress indignation to see the tribute which is only due to virtue and piety, prostituted to usurpation, and cruelty. Formality, and rigour, in perusing Waller's misapplied encomium, will detest his memory ; but rational benevolence will quit this view of him with a generous pity for the weakness of human nature.

Cromwell was ambitious to change his title of protector into that of king. His parliament, however, did not favour his project. To make himself independent of them by seizing American treasures, he declared war against Spain. In the beginning of September in the year 1656, Captain Stayner built three English frigates ; gained a signal victory over the Spanish fleet, off Cales ; and took a galleon which had on board above two millions of plate. On this occasion, Waller's genius was again the slave of Cromwell : he wrote a poem in praise of his conduct and of the naval exploit, entitled—\* ‘ of a war with ‘ Spain, and fight at sea.’ In the conclusion he recommends to the state the object of Cromwell's, and, as the poet says, of the nation's wishes. He proposes that a crown and sceptre should be made for the protector out of the bullion which had been taken from the Spaniards.

Then let it be as the glad nation prays—  
Let the rich ore forthwith be melted down,  
And the state fixed by making him a crown ;

\* Blake and Montague were the admirals of the fleet ; but the battle was fought by Stayner.—See Fenton's comment on the poem.

With

## EDMUND WALLER.

11

With ermin clad, and purple, let him hold  
A royal sceptre made of Spanish gold.

Cromwell died on the third of September in the year 1658, and Waller wrote a poem on that event, entitled—"On the death of the lord protector." The royalists thought that the storm of wind which happened at that time was raised by the devil, the prince of the power of the air, who had come to take possession of the protector's soul, and convey it to the infernal regions. But, if we believe Waller's muse, that hurricane proceeded from a different cause, from the violent grief of nature for the death of so great a man. The gloom of superstition perverts physical effects, and propagates error; the lively imagination of the poet works them into machinery, and only amuses mankind.

The author of Waller's life supposes that he wrote this poem merely from the regard he had for Cromwell, and out of gratitude for his past favours, as he could now no longer befriend, or injure him. But from the tenour of Waller's conduct we may conjecture that the poem was dictated by a different motive; that he wrote it to ingratiate himself with Cromwell's son, who, for aught he then knew, might inherit his father's power.

After his return from banishment, he lived chiefly at Hall-Barn, near Beconsfield, where Cromwell used frequently to visit him, and his mother. Though that lady was related to the usurper, she was a warm royalist, and often took the liberty to upbraid him with his hypocrisy, and barbarity. He had calmness enough not to be angry at this freedom, but waved with jest the accusations which he could not oppose with argument. He used to throw a napkin at Mrs. Waller, and tell her, that he would not enter into disputes with his aunt. So he called her, though she

was only his cousin. At length, however, he discovered that frankness in conversation was not the only consequence of her zeal for the royal cause, but that she carried on some correspondences for the king's interest. She was therefore, by his order, made her daughter's prisoner for some time in her own house.

Though we do not find that Cromwell gave Waller any share in the business of the state, yet he treated him not only with respect, but with kindness. He regarded him as his relation; nor was he insensible of his talents, and his literary accomplishments. There was an intimacy between them; and Cromwell, according to Waller's report, was well acquainted with the Greek and Roman historians, entered into the spirit of those noble writers, and made observations upon them that showed uncommon penetration and taste. He concluded, from this display of the protector's manly sentiments, that his sanctified grimace was only a political character which he had assumed; and the following accident confirmed him in his opinion.

When Waller and he were, one day, engaged in conversation, a servant came, and told Cromwell that some gentlemen who were in the next room, begged leave to speak with him upon particular business. Cromwell went to them, and stayed with them for a little time. It is probable they had waited upon him on an affair of some intricacy. For in leaving them, and opening the door of the apartment where Waller was, he recommended them to better instruction than he could give them, in these words—"The Lord will reveal"—"The Lord will help." Waller ventured to smile at the religious drama.—Cromwell was ingenuous in his turn.—"Cousin Waller, said  
" he,



“ he, I must talk to these men in their own way.” They resumed their conversation, which we may suppose, was more rational than that which had passed between Cromwell and his puritans.

In the year 1660 he presented to king Charles the second, a congratulatory poem, on his majesty's happy return. He wrote it in the fifty-fifth year of his age. Whether, in composing it, the vigour of his mind was precluded by a conscious shame for his inconsistent distribution of praise, or whether the vivacity of his genius was now growing torpid by time, this performance is certainly far inferior to many of his other productions. It seems elaborate, but it is neither spirited, nor accurate; and the similes, by which he would illustrate the clemency of the king, unhappily convey the ideas of ravage and desolation. Mr. Fenton observes, that, from this time our poet's genius declined apace. The remark demands our assent; not because it is Mr. Fenton's, but because the truth of it is proved by Waller's latter pieces; for implicitly to conclude that the mental faculties must always become weaker when the body begins to lose its elasticity, is derogatory to the dignity of the human mind, and contradicted by experience.

Charles the second told Waller that he thought his poem on his return fell far short of his panegyrick upon Cromwell. A just criticism, and a delicate reproof of his flattery of the usurper! Waller, however, was not disconcerted at the oblique, though poignant rebuke; but immediately made the best apology for himself that could have been offered. “ Sir, (replied he to the king) poets always succeed better in composing fiction than in adorning truth.”

About this time the famous St. Evremond left France, his native country, and came to England. He got acquainted with our author, and an intimacy commenced between them, which lasted as long as Waller lived. When St. Evremond went to Holland, where he resided for some years, he gave Waller the charge of his manuscripts, many of which were lost by some accident in 1665, the year of the plague in London. It is thought that St. Evremond returned to England for the sake of Mr. Cowley's company, and Mr. Waller's: the friendship of those great men was formed, and endeared by their congeniality of mind.

No man had the art of pleasing more than Waller; and it gained him the good graces of Charles the second, that easy and sociable king. In his majesty's convivial hours with the duke of Buckingham, and his other gay courtiers, he was often one of the company. Drinking was more common in high life at that time than it is now: but Waller was extremely temperate. Yet he made his conversation agreeable at those meetings to the last hour. He could so well accommodate himself to his company, that his sobriety threw no restraint, nor gloom upon them. He could be as much actuated by the festivity of his temper, and the richness of his fancy as others were by the impression of Bacchus; and nature supplied him with those raptures for which they were indebted to the fecundity of wine. Whence Mr. Saville used to say, that "No man in England should keep him company without drinking but Ned Waller."

An edition of his poems was published in 1664. The preface which was then prefixed to it is printed with his prose works in this edition. It is supposed to have been written by himself, or under his inspection.

The

The kindness with which he was treated by the king encouraged him to ask of his majesty the provostship of Eton-College, in 1665, which became then vacant by the death of Dr. John Meredith. It was granted him by the king ; but the earl of Clarendon, who was then lord chancellor refused to set the seal to the patent, because laymen, he said, could not legally hold the provostship. Waller made a careful search for precedents in his favour ; he only found two, by which the statutes of the college had evidently been violated. His disappointment in not obtaining this office, the possession of which he had been so near, put an end to the intimacy which had long subsisted betwixt him and lord Clarendon ; and in the year 1667, he joined warmly with the duke of Buckingham in the impeachment of that nobleman. In 1668, when Clarendon had fled to France, the provostship of Eton was again vacant by the death of Dr. Allestry, and he again made application for it to the king, who ordered his privy-council to examine and determine whether he might confer it upon a lay-man. The cause was argued before the council for three days by the ablest lawyers of the time. The decision of the question, was, that laymen were excluded from the place by the act of uniformity. The king told Waller that he could not violate an act of parliament. Thus his expectations were a second time defeated ; and the provostship was given to Dr. Zachary Cradock.

Notwithstanding the familiarity to which he was admitted by Charles, his interest with him never went farther, afterwards, than to procure a pardon about the year 1685, for his cousin John Hambden, grandson to the famous Hambden, who had been condemned for high treason, and to prevent the trial of his son for the same crime.

He was a member of the house of commons in two parliaments of this reign. In the second, which met on the eighth of March, 1661, he represented Hastings in Suffex. In the third, which met on the sixth of March, in the year 1678, he was returned the second time for Chipping-Wycombe in Buckinghamshire. Few men have shone with Waller's eloquence in the House, and few have had his parliamentary experience. He sat in eight parliaments; in one of James the first, in four of Charles the first; in two of Charles the second: and in the year 1685, in the reign of James the second, he was chosen for Saltash, a Cornish borough. He was then eighty years old; and yet at that age, bishop Burnet, in the History of his own Times, says, that his speeches were more entertaining than those of any member in the house.

Poetry, in which his youth had been so much employed, was his favourite amusement to the last years of his life. He was old when he altered the Maid's Tragedy, for the entertainment of the court. It is one of Fletcher's plays. Mr. Southerne told his friend Mr. Fenton that he had seen this tragedy acted at the Theatre Royal, towards the end of Charles the second's reign, but not with Mr. Waller's alterations. We find, by a letter from St. Evremond to Corneille, that Waller was a great admirer of that poet, and used to translate parts of his plays. "Mr. Waller" (says St. Evremond to Corneille) "is always impatient to see your new pieces, and never fails to translate an act or two of them, in which he takes great pleasure."

In the year 1680, and in the seventy-fifth of his age, he wrote his poem on the earl of Roscommon's translation of Horace's Art of Poetry. An animated performance for old age; but it was the old age of Waller.



In the year 1685, within two years of his death, he wrote his six Cantos on Divine Love, and his two Cantos on the Fear of God; in which he has more merit as a christian than as a poet. His genius was now oppressed with the infirmities of old age, and his subject was against him. The gay theology of the heathens is more favourable to poetical imagination than the simple, and severe truths of our purer religion. The Greeks and Romans had many deities; they personified love, and wine, and war, and other sensible objects of this lower world. The poet can easily comprehend the nature of those fictitious gods, and avail himself of their attributes. The scriptural system adopted into life will effectually reform the heart, and reward the moral agent with happiness; but the pagan divinity supplies richer and more varied materials to the operations of fancy. There are very few poems of any length, founded upon scripture, which can be perused with pleasure; unless the mind of the reader is more influenced by devotion than taste.

The verses on his sacred poetry were the last he wrote. They would not have done him discredit when his genius was in its meridian. They are at once poetical and philosophical. The reader will see, by the six lines which closed his tuneful strain for ever, that, like the swan of the ancient poets, he sung sweetly to the last. Tacitus wished to have had his feeling mind impressed with the last words of Agricola. May we not listen with a tender attention to the expiring notes of Waller.

The soul's dark cottage, battered, and decayed,  
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made;  
Stronger by weakness, wiser, men become,  
As they draw near to their eternal home :

Leaving

Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view  
That stand upon the threshold of the new. \*

He was above eighty when he wrote the poem, entitled, "A presage of the ruin of the Turkish empire, presented to his majesty king James the second on his Birth-day." James, notwithstanding the bigotry, and gloominess of his mind, affected to be an admirer of Waller. He one day ordered the earl of Sunderland to bid him see him in the afternoon. When Waller came, the king took him into his closet. During their conversation, his majesty asked him how he liked the picture which was there? "Sir (said Waller) my eyes are so dim that I cannot see it."—"It is the princess of Orange" said the king—"And the princess of Orange (replied Waller) is like the greatest woman the world ever saw."—"Pray who was she?"—"Queen Elizabeth." said Waller.—"I am surprised (answered the king) that you should think so: but I must own she had a wise council."—"And did your majesty (rejoined Waller) ever know a fool chuse a wise one?"—In this answer he probably had his eye upon James's imprudent advisers.

When he intended to marry his favourite daughter to Dr. Birch, the king endeavoured to prevent the match, and ordered a French nobleman to tell him that "His majesty wondered he should marry his daughter to a falling church."—"Sir (answered

\* These elegant and sentimental lines drew the following compliment from Dryden which is worthy of its author and the occasion.

Still here remain; still on the threshold stand;  
Still at this distance view the promised land;  
That thou may'st seem, so heavenly is thy sense,  
Not going thither, but new come from thence.

Dryden's Miscellanies.

"Waller)

“ Waller) the king does me very great honour to  
 “ take any notice of my domestick affairs ; but I  
 “ have lived long enough to obierve that this falling  
 “ church has a trick of rising again.”

He told his friends that “ The king would be left  
 “ like a whale upon a strand.” The author of his  
 life infers from this anecdote that he was in the se-  
 cret of the Revolution. But it does not appear  
 from *it* that he was in that secret. A man of com-  
 mon penetration, without being concerned in the  
 Revolution, might have known that the king would  
 run a-ground. The same author further informs us,  
 that his son, and heir, Edmund Waller, joined the  
 party of the prince of Orange, as soon as he landed  
 in England. Neither was he authoris'd by that  
 circumstance, to assert, that the father was, un-  
 doubtedly instrumental in bringing over king Wil-  
 liam.

Waller often conversed with lady Sunderland (who  
 was more famous by the name of Sacharissa than  
 by her title) when they were both very old. The  
 ardent lover had now long been sunk in the polite  
 and entertaining companion. At the countess of  
 Wharton's, at Wooburn near Beconsfield, where  
 many ladies, and gentlemen were met, she asked him  
 “ when he would write such fine verses upon her  
 “ again ?”——“ Oh, madam (replied Waller) when  
 “ your ladyship is as young again.”

Some time before he died, he purchased a small  
 estate at Colehill, the place of his birth. Having  
 gone thither one day to dine, he said “ He should be  
 “ glad to die, like the stag, where he was roused.”  
 We have, naturally, a strong attachment to our na-  
 tive spot ; which to a certain degree, resembles the  
 affection we have for our parents, and our early con-  
 nexions. In the exuberance of fancy, we even ima-  
 gine

gine that the friendly ground will be hospitable to our remains ; that the turf will there lie lighter upon us ; and that our ashes will be guarded by the genius of the place.

In the summer of 1668, having a swelling in his legs, he went to Windsor with his son-in-law, Dr. Birch, to consult Sir Charles Scarborough, who was there, in attendance, as first physician to king James the second. “ I am come (said he) to you, “ as to an old friend as well as a physician, to ask “ you what this swelling means.”——“ Why Sir,” replied Sir Charles, “ your blood will run no longer.” Waller received his sentence with serenity, and resignation.

In the autumn of that year his distemper increased, he was confined to his bed, and he found his death approaching. He prepared himself for the awful crisis ; he desired Dr. Birch to administer the sacrament to him, and his family to join with him in receiving it. He professed his faith in christianity with great earnestness and fervour ; and told those around him an anecdote, which does honour to his easy and social hours ; and his last moments were well employed in relating it. “ I remember (said he) the duke of “ Buckingham once talked profanely before king “ Charles the second when I happened to be one of “ the company.—I could not let his licentious irony “ pass without a reproof. My lord, said I, I am a “ great deal older than your grace ; and I believe I “ have heard more arguments for atheism than ever “ your grace did : but I have lived long enough to “ see there is nothing in them ; and so I hope your “ grace will.” Whatever the defects of Waller’s life were, he supported the last scene of it with propriety and dignity. He died on the twenty-first of  
October,



October, 1687, and was interred with his ancestors in the church-yard of Beconsfield. \*

Many elegies were written on his death by his poetical cotemporaries. He had often caught inspiration in the bowers of Parnassus ; and his grave was shaded with its laurels.

A fine monument was afterwards erected over it by his son's executors. The Latin inscriptions upon it were written by Mr. Rymer, historiographer to the Queen. As they have no force of composition, and as they contain no material information but what will be found in this narrative, I shall not obtrude them upon the reader. It will now be expected that I should say something of his person and character.

The endowments of his mind were recommended by the graces of his form. Mankind are so subject to the fascination of externals, that the effects of the most elevated genius and virtue are greatly obstructed by personal disadvantages. Worth, covered by deformity gains upon us but by slow approaches,

\* He had by his first wife a son and a daughter. The former died young ; the latter was married to Mr. Dormer of Oxfordshire. By his second wife he had five sons, and eight daughters, most of whom survived him. The mind of Benjamin, his eldest son, was so inferiour to that of his father, that he had not a common understanding. He was sent to New Jersey in America. Edmund, our poet's second son, inherited his estate. This gentleman likewise wrote verses ; but by the specimen of his poetry, which we have from the authour of Waller's Life, it appears that he only fancied that he had derived genius from his father. He died without issue, and left the estate to Edmund, the eldest son of his brother, Dr. Stephen Waller, who was the poet's fourth son, and a famous civilian. He was appointed one of the commissioners for the union of the two kingdoms.

and

and must not expect to be generally well received till the world is convinced of its reality by repeated experience. But to him in whom nature hath united amiable qualities and great talents with personal elegance, we are immediately prepared to pay homage. While the eye surveys, the mind wishes to esteem, and to admire.

Waller's person was handsome and graceful. That delicacy of soul, which produces instinctive propriety, gave him an easy manner, which was improved, and finished by a polite education, and by a familiar intercourse with the Great. The symmetry of his features was dignified with a manly aspect; and his eye was animated with sentiment and poetry.

His elocution, like his verse, was musical and flowing. In the senate, indeed, it often assumed a vigorous and majestic tone, which, it must be owned, is not a leading characteristick of his numbers.

He was so happily formed for society, that his company was sought for by those who detested his principles and his conduct. He must have had very engaging qualities who kept up an intimacy with people of two prejudiced, and exasperated parties; and who had the countenance of kings of very different tempers and characters. He was a favourite with the persons of either sex of the times in which he lived, who were most distinguished for their rank, and for their genius. The mention of a Morley, a St. Evremond, a Dorset, a Clarendon, and a Falkland, with whom he spent many of his social hours, excludes a formal eulogium on his companionable talents. Let it suffice, therefore, to observe, that his conversation was chastised by politeness, enriched by learning, and brightened by wit.

The warmth of his fancy, and the gaiety of his  
• dispo-

disposition, were strictly regulated by temperance and decorum. Like most men of a fine imagination, he was a devotee to the fair sex : but his gallantry was not vitiated with debauchery ; nor were his hours of relaxation and mirth prostituted to profaneness and infidelity. Irreligion and intemperance had not infected all ranks in Waller's time as they *have* now ; but he had as much merit in avoiding the contagion of a profligate court, with which he had such familiar intercourse, as we can ascribe to an individual of the present age, who mixes much with the world, and yet continues proof against its licentiousness. He rebuked the impious wit of the libertine even before a king who was destitute of religion and principle ; and who enjoyed a jest upon that sacred truth which it was his duty to defend and to maintain.

But his virtue was more theoretick than practical. It was of a delicate and tender make ; formed for the quiet of the poetick shade, and the ease of society ; not hardy and confirmed enough for a conflict with popular commotions. His behaviour on his trial was hypocritical, unmanly, and abject : yet the alarming occasion of it, on which but few would have acquitted themselves with a determined fortitude, extenuates it in some measure to candour and humanity ; though he who had effectually reduced the discipline of philosophy to practice, would rather have suffered death than purchased life with the ignominy which it cost Waller. But let us recollect that Providence is very rarely lavish of its extraordinary gifts to one man. Let us not condemn him with untempered severity, because he was not a prodigy which the world hath seldom seen ; because his character comprised not the poet, the orator, and the hero.

That

That he greatly improved our language and versification, and that his works gave a new æra to English poetry, was allowed by his cotemporaries, nor has it ever been disputed by good criticks. Dryden tells us he had heard Waller say, that he owed the harmony of his numbers to Fairfax's translation of the Godfrey of Bulloigne. Whoever reads that translation, and compares it with our author's poetry, will see in how rude a state English verse was when Waller began to write, and what advantage it received from *him*. Perhaps more elegant language, and more harmonious numbers than his, would be expected even from a middling poet in this age of refinement: but such a writer would be as much inferior to Waller in absolute merit, as it is more difficult to attain new, than to copy past excellence, as it is easier to imitate than to invent. A voyage to the West Indies, first achieved by Columbus, and the calculations of Newton, are now often made by the modern mariner and mathematician: but who refuses admiration to the inventor of fluxions, and to the discoverer of America?

Ease, gallantry, and wit, are the principal constituents of his poetry. Though he is frequently plaintive with tenderness, and serious with dignity. But impartiality must acknowledge that his muse seldom reaches the sublime. She is characterised by the softer graces, not by grandeur and majesty. It is her province to draw sportive or elegiack notes from the lyre; not to sound the trumpet, and inflame the soul.

Hitherto we have remarked our author's beauties; we must now mention his faults. Undistinguished praise is as weak as it is unjust; it neither does credit to the encomiast, nor to the person commended.

Gram-



Grammatical inaccuracies are not unfrequent in Waller. The literary amusement of the gentleman was not sufficiently tempered with the care and circumspection of the author. He sometimes prefers a point, more brilliant than acute, to a manly and forcible sentiment ; and sometimes violates the simplicity of nature for the conceit of antithesis. In his fondness of simile, he is apt to lose the merit of a good by the addition of a bad one ; in which he sacrifices truth and propriety to sound and splendour. These faults, however, we must, in a great measure, impute to the rudeness of the age, with which greater poets than Waller complied ; partly from negligence, or the immediate influence of example, and partly from necessity.

Waller's works will always hold a considerable rank in English poetry. His great abilities as a statesman and an orator are indisputable ; and his moral character will be viewed with lenity by those whose minds are actuated by humanity, and who are properly acquainted with their own failings ; who consider the violence of the times in which he lived, and who are accustomed to think before they decide.









